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84-145-225 Alan Tauber / THE DAILY GAMECOCK
The Congressional Advisory Board traveled to D.C. to present proposals to statesmen.

CAB lobbies in US capital

**Students traveled
to Washington, D.C. to speak
with congressmen**

Sara Hartley
STAFF WRITER

SC's Congressional Advisory Board traveled to Washington, D.C. this weekend to present its ideas to South Carolina senators and representatives.

"It was really exciting to meet with our South Carolina delegation," said Joe Wright

South Carolina delegation, said Joe Wright, a second-year business student and secretary of organizational outreach for Student Government. "They were very receptive of what we had to say."

Wright is responsible for the CAB, an initiative of SG that started several years ago. The board works on proposals to address issues in South Carolina, and this year the group consists of eight people who were appointed by Wright. It is customary for the board to travel to D.C. each year, and the trip is funded by SG.

Though Wright did not specify the total cost, he said that they were under budget this year. They saved close to \$1,500 by driving

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their own cars to the Charlotte airport and consolidating hotel rooms in D.C., Wright said. SG pays for the trip with money allocated from its budget.

The group stayed in D.C. from Sunday to Tuesday and during this time they met with the offices of Sens. Lindsay Graham and Jim DeMint as well as Reps. Joe Wilson, John Spratt and Jim Clyburn. During these visits they had the opportunity to meet Sen. DeMint, Rep. Wilson and Rep. Spratt in person.

"They were really helpful," Wright said. "We provided a lot of creative and innovative ideas."

Ashley Swearingen, a third-year political science student and member of the CAB, said they also met with lobbying groups in D.C., including the United States Student Association, the Department of Secondary Education and the Office of Management and Budget.

"A lot of people don't realize students go up to D.C. to lobby every year," Swearingen said.

Swearingen said she thinks it makes a big difference to visit the congressmen and their staff in person so they can hear the proposals and ask questions. She also emphasized the

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importance of talking with the staff members of the senators and representatives.

"The people you really want to talk to are the legislative assistants," Swearingen said. "The congressmen get their information from their staff."

Wright said the group presented the senator and representatives with four main proposals, and they left copies of their ideas in the form of an annual report. The proposals mainly address issues in education and the environment.

One proposal, for example, deals with conservation in higher education. The goal is to get more funding from the federal government for green initiatives, Wright said.

Another proposal deals with the economies of different South Carolina counties in relation to the public education. According to the CAB's annual report, counties with poor economies also have some of the lowest test scores.

The report indicated that only 16 percent of elementary students in Hampton County School District Two met the basic standard for the PACT Science test, while Spartanburg District Seven saw almost 81 percent of third graders meet the basic standard.

Given discrepancies such as this, the CAB suggests investing in the green industry to boost the economy of counties that are struggling.

A third proposal argued that students who work for public colleges or universities should qualify for loan forgiveness, but Wright said that a law addressing this actually passed recently.

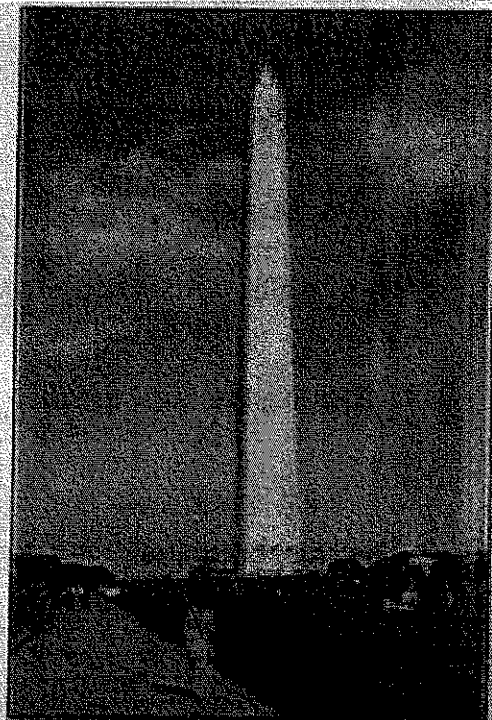
"What we wanted to happen actually happened," he said.

The fourth proposal addresses federal funding for public schools and the retention rate of students. According to the annual report, there is a positive correlation between the amount of federal funding in a school district and the graduation and retention rates of students.

"It's good to sit down with the government to talk about the education system to make sure it's on track," Wright said.

Comments on this story?

E-mail sagcknew@mailbox.sc.edu



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Students visit D.C. to meet congressmen.



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